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ABSTRACT

Teacher/coach role conflict was assessed by surveying individuals who have served simultaneously as teachers and coaches to determine their perceptions of how intense this conflict is. Five areas were examined: (1) value conflicts between society's attitudes and coaching ethics; (2) unequal professional status of coaches; (3) conflict between personal career advancement and commitment to coaching; (4) incompatible expectations regarding the combined work load of coaching and teaching; and (5) differences in skills demanded in coaching and academic teaching. Results indicated that it is increasingly difficult for coaches to maintain traditional values for the behavior of their players. Coaches are trained professionals and members of the educational community, but are frequently treated as if they are not. Though expected to produce winning teams, coaches are expected to consider individual student needs first, whether or not coaching actions based on those considerations would contribute to a winning season. Heavy demands on the coach's time make it difficult to be an effective teacher also. The coach is an expert in teaching sport skills, yet is often assigned to teaching academic subjects which demand a considerably different set of abilities and interests for effective teaching. (JD)

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TEACHER/COACH ROLE CONFLICT: AN ANALYSIS OF OCCUPATIONAL ROLE DYSFUNCTION

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Occupational role conflict occurs when the role occupant perceives his or her role as containing certain aspects of incompatibility. More specifically, Biddle (1979: 160) suggests that role conflict occurs "when someone is subject to two or more contradictory expectations whose stipulations a person cannot meet in behavior." In the case of the teacher/coach, incompatibilities are often perceived and actually experienced when the individual attempts to fulfill two concurrent roles. The occurence of inter-role conflict seems quite predictable when analyzing the two roles together. For example, if the role of the teacher demands that the individual possess the skills and inclinations needed to deal with relatively large numbers of clients who are unmotivated, often hostile, relatively heterogeneous for ability and present under compulsion AND IF one's simultaneous role as coach demands that he or she possess the skills and inclinations required to deal with relatively small numbers of clients who are highly motivated, relatively homogeneous for ability and present as volunteers, THEN IT FOLLOWS that the two roles may not be equally attractive or compatible and when linked together, it is not unexpected that one would become the preferred role, leading perhaps, to dysfunction in the non preferred role.

Quite simply then, as found in previous research (Grace, 1972, Locke and Massengale 1978), the occupation of dual or multiple role may often lead to conflicts which typically bring about the psychological and social-psychological dysfunction of the teacher/coach.

Procedures

This investigation focused upon teacher/coach role conflict by assess-

ing the extent and intensity of inter-role conflict as perceived and experienced by the teacher/coach.

The subjects in this study were 47 individuals, 37 males and 10 females employed in the dual roles of teaching and varsity coaching within 6 Lafayette area high schools.

The subjects responded to the Coaching Problem Survey (hereafter, CPS) developed by Locke and Massengale (1978). This instrument, modeled from a conflict inventory designed by Grace (1972), assesses perceived and experienced occupational role conflict in five different areas related to the coaching role. Area I, value conflicts, involves the incompatibility between the values that coaches are expected to uphold and those that are currently expected by society at large. Area II, status involves the vulnerability of the coaching role emerging from the fact that coaches are not treated as equal professionals within the educational organization and from conflicting opinions of how to coach. Area III (self-other conflicts) concerns the conflict between personal career advancement and the ethical commitment to act in the best interest of athletes. Area IV, load conflict, concerns the incompatible expectations from the combined work load of coaching and teaching, while Area V (Teacher/Coach) relates to differences in the role skills demanded in coaching, and those required in teaching. Two items were devoted to each conflict area with subjects responding to the CPS twice, once in terms of perceived conflicts, and again in terms of actual experienced conflicts. From a Likert response scale, data were scored by dichotomizing subject responses into high and low role conflict categories for each conflict area separately and in terms of perceived and

experience conflict in total.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Results and Discussion

Consistent with previous studies (Grace, 1972; Locke and Massengale, 1978) scores for perceived conflict were greater than those for experienced conflict. That is, in terms of the percentage of subjects falling in high role conflict categories, teacher/coaches perceived far more occupational role conflict than they actually experienced.

Insert Table 1 about here

In contrast to earlier research (Getzels & Guba, 1955; Grace, 1972; Locke & Massengale, 1978) chi-square analyses revealed no differences between male and female teacher/coaches for both conflict schedules. Further, it may be noted no other significant differences were revealed when assessing the interaction of variables such as the sport one coached, the subject one taught, the individual's years of experience, or career aspirations. However, this insignificance may be attributed to the small sample of female subjects.

Insert Table 2 about here

When all five areas were ranked by magnitude of scores, data indicate that teacher/coaches judged Value, Status, and Load Conflicts as areas of greatest concern for the teacher/coach. One-half to over one-half of the teacher/coaches perceived these areas to be sources of conflict. Relative to Load and Value Conflicts, nearly one-half of teacher/coaches reported these areas to be problems in terms of experience. At this point, I would like to address each of these areas separately.

The major strain in terms of Value Conflicts may be attributed to what Grace (1972) terms "value gaps." That is, there exists a gap between the traditional values held by teacher/coaches and the values held and behavioralized by adolescents and society, in general. Although the role of the teacher/coach has characteristically been that of custodian of traditional values and standards the individual's role as a socializing agent appears to be diminished. Data suggest that teacher/coaches perceive and experience conflict when they are expected to promote student acceptance and internalization of values such as honesty, respect and consideration for persons and property, and the endorsement of the work-success ethic, while at the same time such values are being increasingly ignored in a changing society. This conflict may be particularly troublesome to individuals, such as P.E. teachers, who have been described as high in traditionalism and conservatism as well as being low in the need for a change (Sage, 1980).

Turning to Load Conflict, again CPS data were consistent with previous research (Locke & Massengale, 1978). The data revealed that nearly 60% of the subjects were of the general opinion that it is difficult to competently fulfill the tasks expected in each role within stipulated time limits and requirements of quality. Relative to actual experience however, only 42%

of the subjects felt that role overload was a real-life problem. While this reduced figure, in my opinion still appears significant, it does imply, as has been shown in other studies (Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974), that the teacher/coach is to some extent, able to take on additional roles in which he or she is truly interested.

It should be noted, that when one experiences role-overload, such a conflict usually becomes a conflict of priorities as well. That is, as role theory predicts, in order to resolve overload, the teacher coach may prioritize one role, usually the coaching role, over the other, typically the teaching role. Again, as suggested in the introduction of this paper, selecting the coaching role is not altogether surprising when one examines each role separately. For example, the expectations and related pressures associated with coaching appear, in reality, much greater than those for the teacher. Self-imposed, institutional, and community pressure to win and conduct programs in specified ways appears to contribute greatly to the conflict one experiences when occupying dual or multiple roles. Stated in another, more pointed way, teacher/coaches are seldom fired for teaching inadequacies, however, teaching expertise seldom substitutes for losing.

Finally, in terms of Status conflicts, although no statistically significance differences were found between male and female teacher/coaches, it is interesting to note 70% (7 out of 10) of the females perceived high conflict and 60% actually experienced status conflict. Although the age of Title IX is upon us, its impact seems to be quite weak as women continue to struggle for equality within the athletic setting. Quite simply, the data appear to verify the reality of the fact that female teacher/coaches have not yet attained the prestige, financial support, authority and power enjoyed by their male counterparts. Although these individuals have made

a large commitment and highly regard their positions, a status conflict of what is ideal and what is real exists. Until the day when female athletics is held in the same esteem as male sports, status, in my opinion, will continue to be a problem.

Summary

In summary, the preceding has attempted to briefly describe inter-role conflict as perceived and epxerienced by a small sample of teacher/coaches. To a degree, these findings may support the folklore of physical education and athletics which suggests the "good coach, poor teacher" phenomenon. That is, the presence of the legendary coach who with athletic teams performs prodigious feats of instruction . . . ., but who, when confronted with an academic class, is ineffective or, in case of the P.E. class "rolls out the ball" or retreats to the locker room to diagram plays (Locke and Massengale, 1978: 165).

Although I am sure that some of the teacher/coaches in this study do not fit this characterization, the uniqueness of the occupational role of the teacher/coach as well as the internal and external pressures associated with this dual role, has placed the individual in a complex, conflict situation that promotes the liklihood of such a picture of role dysfunction.

Within our present occupational and employment structure, role conflict and dysfunction is probably unavoidable. Although we would all prefer competent performance by the individual regardless of the multiplicity of role assignments, this seems ideal. Hence, the teacher/coach must not be made out as a villain, but seen, unfortunately, as one caught in the midst of a highly complex and unequal reward system, where skill in compromise and role bargaining becomes a matter of professional necessity and survival.

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TABLE 1

Percent Teacher/Coaches Scoring High and Low on Perceived and Experienced Role Conflict (N=47)

		Perceived		Experienced	
	Conflict Area	High	Low	High	Low
I	Values	57.4	42.6	42.6	57.4
II	Status	55.3	44.7	34.0	66
III	Self/Others	40.4	59.6	21.2	78.8
IV	Load	59.6	40.4	42.6	57.4
V	Teacher/Coach	31.9	68.1	25.5	74.5
	TOTAL	36.2	63.8	17	83

TABLE 2

Percent of Male and Females. Scoring High and Low on Perceived and Experienced Role Conflict (Male N=37) Females N=10)

		Perceived				Experienced			
	Conflict Area	High		Low		High		Low	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I	Values	59.5	50	40.5	50	43.2	40	56.8	60
II	Status	51.4	70	48.6	30	32.4	40	67.6	60
III	Self/Other	35.1	60	64.9	40	19	30	81	70
IV	Load	56.8	70	43.2	30	40.5	50	59.5	50
V	Teacher/Coach	32.4	30	67.6	70	27	20	73	80
	TOTAL	29.7	60	70.3	40	16.2	20	83.8	80

Figure Captions

1. Role Conflict Areas and Related CPS Items

Role Conflict Areas	Related CPS Items
Area I - Value Conflict - The incompatibility between the values coaches are expected to uphold with athletes and those currently upheld by society.	In a society which is becoming more cynical and permissive it is increasingly difficult for coaches to maintain traditional values and standards for the behavior of their players.
Area II - Status Conflict - The vulnerability of the coaching role to the fact that expertise in the execution of some coaching functions is not widely regarded as unique to the coach.	Coaches are trained professionals and members of the educational community, but despite this sometimes are treated as if they were not.
Area III - Self/Other Conflict - The tension between motives for personal career advancement and the ethical commitment to act as an educator.	Even though they are expected to produce teams with winning records, coaches often are expected to put considerations of individual student (player) need first, whether or not coaching actions based on those considerations would contribute to a winning season.
Area IV - Load Conflict - The incompatible expectations deriving from the combined work loads of teaching and coaching.	With so many heavy demands on the coach's time, it often is difficult or impossible to do a good job of teaching (in physical education or in the classroom).
Area V - Teacher/Coach Conflict - Related to the differences in role skills and attitudinal dispositions demanded in coaching and those required in teaching.	The coach is an expert in teaching sport skills in the varsity situation, yet often he or she is assigned to teaching physical education or academic subjects which demand a considerably different set of abilities and interests for effective teaching.